

## **THERAPEUTIC LETTERS**

Therapeutic letters are writing tools to help the person identify difficult feelings, process them in a way that maybe they could not in a traditional therapy session, and finally get release and freedom from them. Therapeutic letters are not necessarily letters that you indeed send. You may write it, but choose not to send it. People sometimes release the feelings by tearing up the letter at a later date, or may choose to burn them (of course in a way that does not place themselves or others in any situation of danger). Or if the writer is in therapy, they could choose to read the letter to their therapist, or another trusted person.

Some examples of therapeutic letters are:

- A letter to a child given up for adoption, asking for forgiveness, or communicating unexpressed feelings of regret
- A letter of love and saying good-bye to a family member who died suddenly
- A letter of expressing honesty about having stolen something or someone
- A letter of letting go to a dying parent
- A letter to a former lover who you betrayed or who betrayed you
- A letter to an unborn child who died during the birth process, miscarriage or who was aborted
- A letter to oneself about promising to change dysfunctional patterns of relationships
- A letter expressing feelings about an incident or pattern of sexual assault or incest with a family member
- A letter to an alcoholic parent(s) about how their problem affected you as a child and now as an adult
- A letter to express feelings to a now adult child who has disclosed his/her homosexuality
- A letter to oneself to commit to a full and complete recovery from alcoholism, drugs or depression
- A letter to an ex-spouse to reveal what you knew to be your part in your marriage's failure
- A letter to a sibling who you wronged or who wronged you
- A letter to oneself about your feelings about having a chronic or debilitating illness, or to the medical professionals who have been treating you for that illness
- A letter to God to "set the record straight," "come clean," make a promise to change, etc.

Therapeutic letters need not be fancy. They can be written on loose-leaf paper, handwritten, typed, whatever. The object is to dare to deal with the problem that's been upsetting you, possibly for a long time. You might have to get your hands dirty in order to deal with it, by experiencing some unpleasant feelings. You can hold the words on paper in your hands, and put them down if you cannot bear to read them any longer and resume the writing the next day. They will be there to deal with, once you are ready to. You can uncover your story and take a good, long, hard look at what caused all the smell in the first place.

Finally, therapeutic writing is a treatment to help you recuperate and claim lost parts of yourself or your soul. You may want to seek counseling to help you face and understand the story you identified inside you. This does not admit weakness to access your strengths, as you become willing to confront yourself and live a healthy contemplative life. Whatever path you choose, writing can help you by itself, or with further professional, social or family support.